

Senate is prepared to confirm this highly qualified nominee on a bipartisan basis. I certainly look forward to working with her and with my friends on both sides of the aisle here in Congress to shore up cyber security vulnerabilities and keep American families, businesses, and the Federal Government secure.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. PETERS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of the following nomination, Calendar No. 176.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Jen Easterly, of New York, to be Director of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, Department of Homeland Security.

Mr. PETERS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nomination without intervening action or debate and that, if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, all without intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order to the nomination; that any statements related to the nomination be printed in the RECORD; and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Easterly nomination?

The nomination was confirmed.

Mr. PETERS. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CUBA

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, this weekend, the people of Cuba rose up in opposition to their repressive socialist government.

I think it is important to be clear on that point because much of the mainstream media that is reporting on these protests makes it sound as if everything is pandemic related, but what is happening in Cuba is not an economic fluke, and every single person serving in this body, working in the media, and analyzing the policy implications knows better than to say otherwise.

This isn't the pop socialism touted by the American left. It is not fashionable. There is no empowerment or equality in the socialist regime; there

is just starvation, shortages, violence, and failure. For 62 years, the ruling Communists have bled the Cuban people dry, and now armed thugs have taken to the streets to repress the opposition at any cost.

Make no mistake, this is a test for President Biden. He must draw a line in the sand.

I call on my colleagues in the majority and on President Biden and the members of his Cabinet to join me in supporting all who would risk their lives to expose the ravages of socialism in Cuba.

We must lead in discussions with the U.N. and the EU and coordinate opposition to this violence being carried out against the people of Cuba.

We must demand that the Cuban Government allow for a free and open internet and initiate investigations into if and how Havana used technology supported by the Chinese Communist Party to cut off access to the internet just as the protests started gaining mainstream attention.

We cannot stand by while Communist thugs gun down their own people. We cannot let this become another Venezuela.

Just as we stand with the freedom fighters suffering in Hong Kong, on mainland China, and in other socialist regimes around the world, we must stand with the people of Cuba.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Madam President, meanwhile, we are 6 months into a new era in American politics. The Biden administration is still treating government like a graduate seminar, and the American people are still wondering when their President is going to stop catering to the radical left and start doing his job.

As I was back home in Tennessee, I found out many Tennesseans are absolutely disgusted. They have decided that our Democratic colleagues are not serious about doing serious work. Their priorities and the President's priorities have never been further apart.

They are looking at those line items the administration is checking off, and all they can see is what the administration refuses to acknowledge; that there are very real consequences to this out-of-control agenda.

When President Biden killed the Keystone XL Pipeline, Tennesseans did not cheer. All they saw on the horizon were higher gas prices and a vulnerable fuel supply chain.

Not 4 months after Biden signed the Executive order, the Colonial Pipeline hack showed us what can happen when something interrupts the supply chain.

When President Biden opened the border, they knew better than to believe all the hype about this so-called solution to our immigration crisis, and their instincts were spot on. Now the chaos tearing apart communities in the American Southwest is bleeding into communities in Tennessee.

For Democrats here in DC, all of those line items came with zero consequences. Instead of focusing on re-

ality, they are making policy based on a perfect world scenario where consequences are simply collateral damage.

Of course, here in the real world, when you talk about collateral damage, you are really referring to the people who pay the price for all of these absurd policies.

You know, we read a lot in the news these days about what a struggle it is for the Senate majority to get their bills to the President's desk.

No struggle over legislation or pay-fors will ever compare to what you are putting the average American through. If we want to talk about pay-fors, let's talk about how Americans are supposed to pay for gas to get to and from work. What happens when they just can't afford it anymore?

Inflation is already taking a toll on the average family's ability to pay for their weekly groceries. Supply chain problems have made concerns over paying for raw materials like lumber obsolete. There is nothing to pay for.

The American people have lost so many simple things that used to be not easy but manageable. But now, when they ask Washington to shape up and give them a break, all they get in return is the assurance that struggle and loss is all part of the plan.

It is July, and we still haven't seen a reasonable infrastructure proposal. No, instead, what we have is a truly insulting two-bill scheme that Senate Democrats concocted in lieu of a mandate for their radical environmental agenda.

What will the American people get from this scheme? Well, just a fraction of what could be the largest spending initiative in history will go toward the roads, bridges, and broadband connections that people actually need and are willing to pay for.

If Democrats want the more radical line items, they will have to force it through by abusing the reconciliation process. In a sane world, this wouldn't even be a choice. They wouldn't do it because Democrats know that the kind of spending they are talking about will exacerbate inflation and increase the deficit.

Meanwhile, Senate Democrats have all but ignored their duty to keep the country secure. In May, Customs and Border Protection caught more than 180,000 people trying to cross our southern border. Drug seizures were up 18 percent across the Nation. As of the end of June this year, CBP has arrested more than 1 million migrants trying to come into this country. That is right. By the end of June, CBP has arrested more than 1 million migrants trying to come into the country.

This is a vulnerability, and I would ask my Democratic colleagues and President Biden why they are not more concerned about it.

I would also ask why they are not more concerned about the impending collapse in Afghanistan. The dominos are falling. Iran wasted no time stepping in to negotiate a deal between the Afghan Government and the Taliban.

Let's be clear what the Biden administration has done here. By turning their backs on 20 years of hard work and sacrifice in Afghanistan, they created a power vacuum in a strategically important region, knowing that the world's most belligerent state sponsor of terror was waiting to fill the gap.

It is time for President Biden to start listening to the people paying the price for his radical agenda. They feel like they are losing their country. They are talking to us about their fear of losing their country and their freedom. They are out of time, and I will tell you what, they are about to be out of patience.

If you bothered to ask them what they want, they would tell you get the spending under control; keep this country and our allies safe; and stop distracting yourself with wish list projects that serve no one but the most radical elements of the Democratic Party. They are not willing to pay for that wish list.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, ahead of the last work period, Senator SCHUMER, the majority leader, outlined his designed-to-fail agenda. He forecasted a series of votes on legislation that stood zero chance of actually passing—legislation to exploit the cause of pay fairness to line the pockets of trial lawyers, to erode Americans' Second Amendment rights, to force schools and hospitals to comply with "woke" social norms, and, of course, the marquee bill, a partisan takeover of our elections.

It was obvious from the outset that this agenda wasn't designed to achieve results. It takes bipartisanship. It takes rolling up your sleeves and working to build bipartisan consensus to get things done in the Senate—especially so in an equally divided Senate as we have now.

Rather than put forward a number of bills that would earn that sort of bipartisan support and actually pass, Senator SCHUMER chose to spend most of the Senate's time last month putting on a show for the so-called progressive base of his party, and I expect even more political theater this month.

So in the next few weeks, we are told, our Democratic colleagues will put their dual-track legislative approach to the test. One of those tracks will include a heavy dose of bipartisanship, and that is something I applaud.

Contrary to public opinion, Republicans and Democrats in the Senate spend a lot of time working together. So far this year, we have worked together to counter threats from China,

support small businesses impacted by the pandemic, and combat the increase in hate crimes against Asian Americans. We have done all of that together in a bipartisan way. Bipartisan solutions are also being crafted to address other major issues, from the border crisis, to drug pricing, to police reform.

In the coming weeks, the Senate is expected to vote on one of those bipartisan agreements; that is, to rebuild and maintain our Nation's infrastructure. The process that brought us to this point certainly has been a roller coaster. After weeks of back-and-forth negotiations, a group of more than 20 Senators reached an agreement with the White House just last month. But here is when things got very strange. Within minutes of the announcement, the President himself put the fate of that agreement into question. He said he wouldn't sign the bill unless Democrats paired it with a multitrillion-dollar reconciliation bill that would include a smorgasbord of leftist spending priorities and trillions in higher taxes and more debt for Americans. Talk about whiplash. Both Republicans and Democrats were caught off guard. That hadn't been part of the discussions or negotiation. That isn't what they said they agreed to.

Well, the reversal and unexpected announcement from the President that, even though they were announcing a deal, they didn't have a deal, prompted a weekend press cleanup, and the President issued a lengthy statement clarifying that it was not a veto threat. But we have no reason to suspect that the larger sentiment has changed.

In a letter to his Democratic colleagues last Friday, the majority leader, Senator SCHUMER, said the Senate will consider both the bipartisan deal on infrastructure and the partisan budget resolution with reconciliation instructions. The bipartisan deal is very much tied to the fate of a completely partisan reconciliation bill, notwithstanding President Biden's cleanup after his unexpected announcement at the White House.

Our Democratic colleagues don't have to listen to me, but I do believe they would be wise to avoid this path. They already went on a nearly \$2 trillion spending binge earlier this year and sidelined every single Republican in the Congress during the process.

They tried to bill this ultrapartisan legislation as COVID-19 relief, but we all know that only about 10 percent of the bill was directly related to the pandemic and only 1 percent was tied to vaccinating the American people. The rest, 90 percent, was exactly the type of thing you would expect to see in a bill that has only the support of our Democratic colleagues—funding for climate justice, backdoor money for Planned Parenthood, and more funding for State and local governments than they know what to do with. Blue States are using that money to pay down old debts with the funding. Our Democratic colleagues claim that money

was necessary for pandemic relief, but that is not what it is being used for.

So how are we faring after Democrats passed this bill? Did the American Rescue Plan truly rescue America? Well, when it comes to the virus, the answer is clearly no. As I said, only a small portion of this massive spending supported our fight against COVID-19.

When this bill was signed into law, the majority of frontline workers had already been vaccinated, and vaccine makers were working as quickly as possible to supply the rest of the American people who wanted them with shots. Today, two-thirds of adults in America have received at least one dose of the vaccine—two-thirds. That progress came because of the bipartisan work that happened last year, not this year.

This legislation certainly didn't rescue our already sluggish economy. In fact, it has created more hurdles for our economy. Democrats created an incentive for workers to remain on the sidelines of the labor market through the end of September by offering enhanced Federal bonuses to State unemployment.

In Texas, for example, businesses of all types have struggled to find willing workers. For every industry, from hospitality, to retail, to manufacturing, to energy, "Help Wanted" signs can be found everywhere across my State, and we are not alone. One restaurant owner said the government has been its biggest competitor when it comes to finding workers.

The labor squeeze has become so tight that half of the States, including Texas, ended the supplemental unemployment benefits early because they were not compensating people who couldn't work or couldn't find work but paying people more than they would earn if they did work when jobs were readily available.

Those are just the problems that have been created with the labor market. Families across the country have felt the sting of inflation as they have paid higher prices on everything from gasoline to groceries. This is exactly the scenario outlined by economists across the country, including those who call themselves Democrats, people like Larry Summers, who served as Treasury Secretary under President Clinton and Director of the National Economic Council under President Obama. He was among the first to warn about inflation or rising costs for consumers, and, boy, you must have thought he was a skunk at the garden party.

You would think this might serve as a lesson to our Democratic colleagues about shoveling money out the door as fast as they can, even when it creates massive debt and the threat of more inflation, but here we are once again. Our Democratic colleagues are preparing to spend trillions more dollars on top of the trillions of dollars we have already spent on a bipartisan basis to combat the virus but then afterwards to spend

more money on their chosen political priorities and not on the pandemic. They want to now add additional trillions of dollars to that debt and to that spending, risking even more dangerous and volatile inflation.

The details of what this round of spending might look like are still coming together, but we know that if the chairman of the Budget Committee, BERNIE SANDERS, has his wish, the price tag could come out as high as \$6 trillion more. Six trillion dollars is a quarter of our gross domestic product. If you convert our country's World War II spending to today's dollars, it only comes out to \$4.4 trillion. So the Democratic chairman of the Budget Committee wants to spend more money than we spent to defeat Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan during World War II.

But I want to be clear about another thing. This so-called human infrastructure plan, which is just made-up words indicating that they are trying to mask the reality of what they want to spend money on—it is not about bridges and roads. It is not about broadband, things that we all understand are truly infrastructure. It is about a long list of political spending preferences, and it certainly can't be compared to spending the money we needed in order to win World War II.

For example, they want to spend trillions and trillions of dollars more on Medicare expansion, electric vehicle chargers, home-based care, free college, and a long list of liberal priorities. We are happy to debate those but not to jam them in a \$6 trillion spending package.

All of this spending would be in addition to the more than \$1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure bill that apparently is currently being drafted. I know we have been talking for weeks about a bipartisan infrastructure bill, but I have learned as recently as today that there is no bill text, and the Congressional Budget Office that scores these bills has not done so yet so we can determine whether the so-called pay-fors are, indeed, legitimate and stand up to scrutiny.

Our national debt is at the highest level since World War II. This is not the time to spend and spend and spend until our grandkids are left sitting in a pile of debt so deep that they will have no hope of climbing out of it. And we certainly can't tax and spend our way to prosperity. We need to take a hard look at our spending habits and make some tough choices, like most American families. They have to decide: What are my priorities, and what are the resources I have to spend to fund those priorities? And that is exactly what we need to do here in Congress.

Folks on both sides of the aisle want to rebuild our Nation's infrastructure. Rebuilding resilient roads, bridges, and broadband are top of mind for Republicans and Democrats. I know our colleagues are still working on text, as I said, for the bipartisan infrastructure

deal, and I am eager to see the details on how this massive investment is paid for. But, again, this is only one-half of the so-called dual-track process announced by Senator SCHUMER.

The exorbitant pricetags being floated for the second track have raised serious concerns not just among folks on this side of the aisle but on both sides of the aisle.

I sincerely hope that some of our colleagues on the other side will stand up against irresponsible spending. As we know, it takes just one Democratic Senator to stand in the way of this abuse of the reconciliation process, and I hope one or more of them will have the courage to do so.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

(The remarks of Mr. LEAHY pertaining to the introduction of S. 2311 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that Senators SCOTT of Florida, MENENDEZ, TUBERVILLE, and SCHUMER be allowed to complete their remarks prior to the vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Alabama.

VETERANS

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Madam President, last week, when we were all back home, we all got to celebrate the Fourth of July. Cooking out, spending time with our family and friends, watching fireworks is always special.

Sitting there with my family, I thought about how blessed we are to live in the United States of America. We get to live in the most free and prosperous country in the history of the world. We owe that freedom and prosperity to the people who declared their independence on July 4, 245 years ago.

They fought and won their freedom for an idea called America. That American idea lives on two-and-a-half centuries later, thanks to the generations of men and women who, like many before them, put on the uniform to defend this great country. Many gave their lives, the ultimate sacrifice, to defend the United States. But many more are still with us, and future generations will continue to volunteer to protect the freedoms and liberties this country affords us every day.

Today we have got almost 20 million veterans in the United States, and 400,000 of them call Alabama home. I have had the honor and pleasure to meet many Alabama veterans the past few years. I am always heartened to talk with them about their service to our great country, but what I hear over and over again is that there is more we can do for all of our veterans: better access to care, better opportunities to reenter civilian life.

Taking care of our veterans is personal for me. My dad served in World

War II and died on Active Duty after the war. But he taught me so many valuable lessons, like work ethic, perseverance, and love of country. When I meet with veterans, I see the same patriotism my dad lived out every day of his life.

You know, I never served myself. The Vietnam war was over before I got out of college, but many guys I knew from back home served in Vietnam. I saw how badly they were treated by the media, by Hollywood, and even by their fellow Americans. They were just trying to serve their country. They watched their friends die, and when they got home, they weren't treated very well.

I thank God we treat our veterans today better than we did when I was growing up. And veterans from the Vietnam era are still the largest of the veteran group in this United States that we live in today. More than 100,000 Vietnam vets live in Alabama.

But there is still more we can do to give them the care and resources that they need and deserve. I am honored to be a member of the Senate's Veterans' Affairs Committee, where we can hear about the problems facing our veterans firsthand and work together on commonsense solutions.

The biggest challenge our veterans face is the access to quality care. We have all seen it in the news. We have heard about it firsthand. Far too often, veterans can't get the care they need in a timely manner. One veteran who doesn't have access to care is one too many.

My main priority is to get veterans the care they need and they well deserve by whatever means at our disposal, period. A solution to help address that problem is the GHAPS Act, Guaranteeing Healthcare Access to Personnel Who Served, introduced by my friend and committee ranking member Senator MORAN from Kansas.

The GHAPS Act would identify persistent gaps that veterans face and would help craft innovative solutions to make certain all veterans receive quality and timely care, especially our veterans living in rural areas. The bill would also direct the VA to create a telehealth strategic plan so that we can use modern methods to improve access to care.

I am proud to cosponsor that legislation and will be working with Ranking Member MORAN to get this bill passed.

We also need to do more to address the scourge of veteran suicide. It is absolutely tragic that more than 18 veterans take their own life every day. I have partnered with groups like America's Warrior Partnership, who are gathering data on veteran suicide across the country to determine how we can combat this terrible epidemic, leveraging both the VA and community resources.